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Kindergarten Pedagogy

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During May and June the class will plan outlines which will be the starting-point for selection and adaptation of stories, songs, games, and hand-work in making and picturing for the children of the kindergarten.

We have selected the children of a certain neighborhood near the school to study through observation of their street play and games. By studying their environment, we may gain something in ability to trace the influence of surroundings in shaping their plays, and to find out more nearly what they need.

The neighborhood gives us typical city conditions, save that it is within walking distance of the park and lakeshore, which gives a much larger opportunity for familiarity with natural life. The children's homes are about the average as to means.

The first outline which has been begun is a skeleton plan of subject-matter for a year. Five principles have been worked out that serve as tests of the value of matter offered.

I. It must be a common experience of the mass of the children.

II. It must be of direct interest to all.

III. It must be of immediate help in their lives.

IV. It must be fundamental, leading to future interests and opportunities.

V. It must afford incentives to bodily expression in work or play.

According to these tests, much that is often used in the way of nature subjects, trades no longer followed here, and some Froebellian games must be ruled out for the children in this locality. To illustrate:

The trade games of the farmer, miller, and baker get their significance, so far as the children are concerned, not because it is the autumn season, or because they illustrate the great law of interdependence, but because they are human activities that have actually been seen and heard. No matter how interesting or full of meaning these processes of plowing, sowing, reaping, carting, and grinding may be, we cannot make them real enough to serve a very large place in furnishing material for dramatization unless the children have had actual contact with these or similar processes.

The place may be supplied by processes in trade life quite as necessary to the personal and social life of the children, and carrying the same lesson of interrelation.

Another plan will be made more in detail, giving modes of presentation and suggestions for expression in songs, games, picture-making, and constructive hand-work.

One principle that will be kept in mind in these detailed plans is the place given relatively to the incidental and essential.

Some topics are full of suggestion, that is, dramatic in character, and afford incentives and substance for dramatic play and drawing. Other phases of the subject may need building to fitly express the idea, while still others may demand real work. Each subject suggested will be criticised from the point of view that the word "balance" may express.

Froebel's writings will be consulted as reference whenever a principle has been developed by the efforts of the class.